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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 STOCKHOLM 000032

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SUBJECT: SWEDISH POLDIR ON GEORGIA AND EASTERN PARTNERSHIP

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1B. 2008 BERLIN 1692

1C. 2008 WARSAW 1409

1D. 2008 STOCKHOLM 792

Classified By: DCM Robert Silverman for reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

11. (C) Summary: MFA Political Director Lyrvall told us on January 15:

-- Sweden sees "eye-to-eye" with the USG on Georgia and the separatist regions, but had been frustrated that a "harder line" was being resisted by other EU members who wanted to "move on";

-- Within the EU, Sweden would continue to highlight the strategic implications of Russia's invasion of Georgia;

-- On the Eastern Partnership initiative, Ukraine is the most enthusiastic of the six states, and he hoped EU leaders would bless the project during their May summit, though there are issues about inviting Belarus President Lukashenko and some new EU members may raise objections related to their Russian gas dependency.

End Summary.

Eastern Partnership On Track, But Obstacles Remain

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12. (C) DCM and Political Counselor met January 15 with Swedish MFA Political Director Bjorn Lyrvall, who opened the meeting by saying he was leaving later in the day for Ukraine to discuss the Eastern Partnership. Of the six Eastern Partnership states, Ukraine had moved the closest to the EU, according to Lyrvall, even though Kiev felt some unhappiness over the EU's Eastern Neighborhood Policy, which was seen as a "top-down plan" imposed by Brussels. In contrast, Ukrainians feel an increased sense of ownership of the Eastern Partnership, Lyrvall said. The European Commission proposals for implementing the Partnership are now being discussed by EU member states, Lyrvall continued, and Sweden will do what it can to ensure that the proposals are not "watered down." Some of the "Southerners" are concerned over the amount of money to be spent in the East, so Sweden, Poland and other like-minded states will need to work hard to preserve the project, he noted. Moreover, Lyrvall stated, while the Germans support the Eastern Partnership in principle, they are showing some "sensitivity" over the details, such as visa liberalization for the six states (Refs B and C).

13. (C) Lyrvall stated that the current energy crisis between the Ukraine and Russia could have "dire implications" that risk complicating Eastern Partnership implementation because some EU member states place the blame squarely on the shoulders of Ukraine. Lyrvall said it was not clear who the "good guys" are, noting EU monitors have reported that the

Russians are moving gas in a "very complicated way." But in any case, Lyrvall continued, "we cannot count on full support from certain states" -- including Slovakia, Romania and Bulgaria -- for "goodies" for Ukraine.

¶4. (C) The Czechs want to see the Eastern Partnership initiative adopted at the European Council in March and plan to invite the six heads of state to the EU summit in May, Lyrvall stated. "There will of course be problems with Lukashenko," he continued, adding that Lukashenko would need to deliver "something in advance, something more than he has done so far," before being invited to his first meeting with European leaders in six years. Lyrvall noted that Lukashenko has been good on Georgia to date, refusing to recognize the separatist regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, but he questioned whether Minsk would ultimately be forced to yield to increasing Russian pressure.

Georgia: Sweden and U.S. See "Eye-to-Eye"

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¶5. (C) DCM delivered reftel talking points on Georgia, and Lyrvall replied that Sweden "sees eye-to-eye" with the United States on these issues and had been trying to push a "harder line" within the EU, albeit with limited success. Lyrvall commented on Georgia fatigue within the EU, a "backlash reaction" from some states arguing that it is time to "move on." A number of EU states have problems with any "sticks" proposed for South Ossetia and Abkhazia, he added.

¶6. (C) It was still possible to "get focus" from European foreign ministers on the OSCE mission, however, and Lyrvall

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stated that the Greek OSCE chair had put together a number of clever ideas for new OSCE missions to the region. The Greeks had had some discussions with the Georgians and Russians on an "elegant formula that could fly," involving a special kind of security and stabilization mission in South Ossetia and "Georgia proper" to be run out of Vienna that would operate in parallel with the monitoring mission. But beyond OSCE, it was becoming very hard now to keep Georgia on the agenda, he said. Sweden will continue to make clear that Europe must not underestimate the strategic implication of Russia's attack on Georgia, concluded Lyrvall.

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